Getting Started with Virtual Fairfax
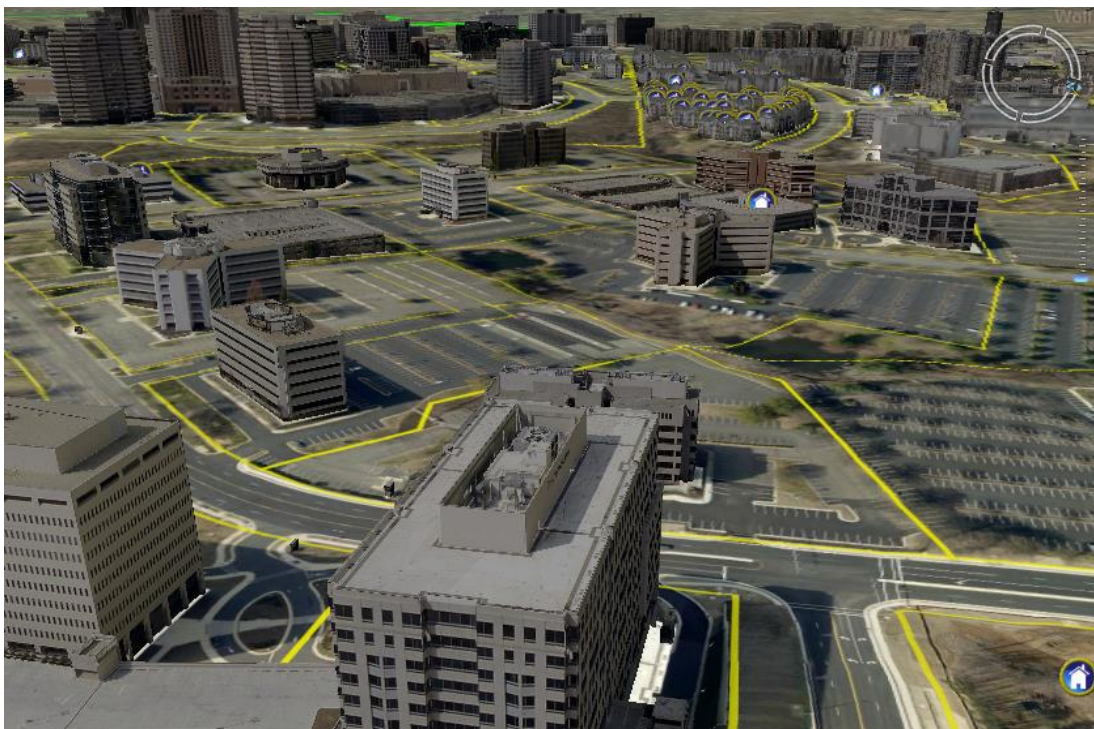
A Quick Start Guide

This Guide provides a brief overview of basic Virtual Fairfax features. Please see the help ⊕ button within Virtual Fairfax for detailed description of available tools.

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View of Tysons looking to the West

System Requirements

A downloadable plugin ([TerraExplorer 6.6.1](#)) is required to use the Virtual Fairfax application. TerraExplorer 6.6.1 is a sophisticated 3-D GIS desktop viewer produced by Skyline Software Systems Inc and is only available on Windows operating systems. Full system requirements are detailed below. It is understood that the Windows OS and hardware requirements makes it difficult for some, however Virtual Fairfax will expand to more platforms once the technology allows it.

Previous users of Virtual Fairfax that had used versions of the plugin lower than 6.6.1 need to upgrade the TerraExplorer 6.6.1. Please follow the instructions in the Installation Guide for uninstalling previous versions before downloading and installing 6.6.1. Once installed, please click the launch button to enter Virtual Fairfax.

The system requirements for the TerraExplorer plugin (a key component of *Virtual Fairfax*) are:

- **Operating System** - Windows 98/2000/Me/XP/Vista/7
- **System Memory** - 512MB RAM (1024MB or more recommended)
- **Video Card** - 64MB of memory (128MB or more recommended)
- **Internet Connection** - Broadband connection recommended.
- **Browser** - Microsoft Internet Explorer 6 or higher should be installed on machine. Virtual Fairfax can run on more recent versions of FireFox, but it calls Internet Explorer from within FireFox.

The TerraExplorer plug-in is about 35 megabytes in size and may be downloaded and installed quickly from *[Virtual Fairfax's](#)* entry page.

Navigation

Points of Interest

1. After clicking the "Points of Interest" tab from the left panel, choose a location from the list of places. This will "fly" you to the selected location.
2. Points of interest locations that are followed by the "- 3D" label contain views of photo-realistic three-dimensional building models.
3. For the points of interest preceded by the ⊙ icon, clicking them will begin a dynamic tour of a broad area rather than one specific spot. To control the tour, you may use the control tools at the upper middle of the map view.

Using the Mouse on the Terrain

1. Click and hold the left mouse button on a location in the terrain:
   a. **To pan**, drag the mouse (the pointer icon will change 🖑 to 🖐) to the sides, forward, or backward. The terrain location on which you clicked will be dragged along with the tool.
   b. **To pan continuously**, drag the mouse in similar fashion as above but keep the mouse moving for a moment after releasing the mouse button. This "throwing" motion will continue the movement in the same direction. The speed that you move the mouse determines the speed that the imagery will move.
   c. **To tilt and rotate**, either press the "Ctrl" button while dragging the mouse, or click (not roll) the mouse center wheel button to turn and tilt the terrain. The mouse icon will change from 🖑 to 🖐. This method is the best to appreciate the three-dimensional character of *Virtual Fairfax*.
2. **To zoom**, roll the middle mouse wheel to zoom in or out. To only change elevation, hold the "Ctrl" key when rolling the mouse wheel.

Different perspective of a Tysons Corner building achieved using the pan and tilt navigation tool

Searching

Finding a location on the map

Using the intelligent search box under the "Home" tab on the toolbar, you may type in any address, school, park, hospital, shopping center, or other place name in the County. After pressing the "Search" button, if there is only one returned result, you will automatically "fly" and zoom to the location on the map. A blue pin icon will indicate the location on the map.
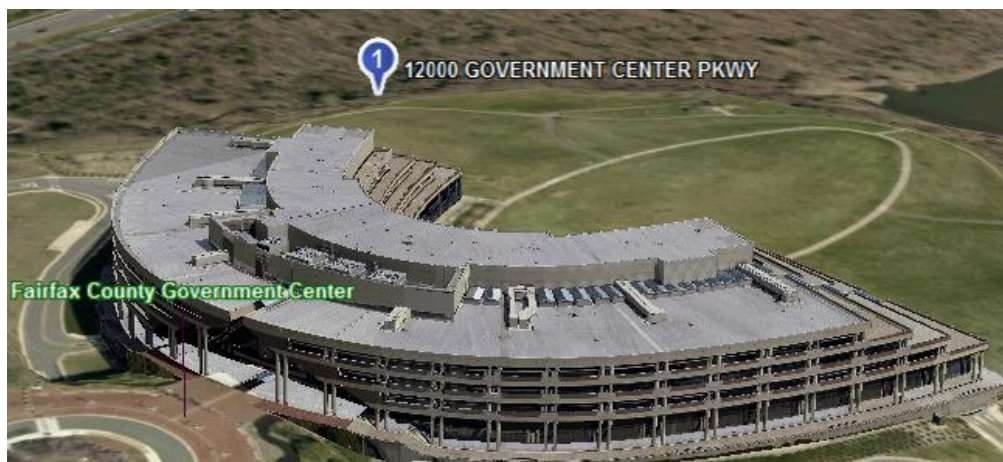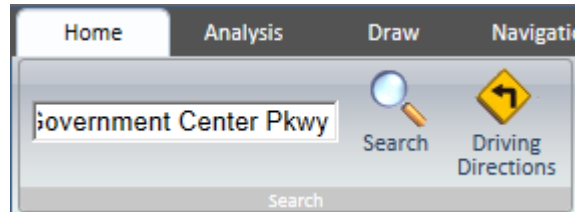
If there is more than one returned result, a list of possible matches to your entry will be shown in a "Result" window on the bottom of the left panel. Each results is indexed with a number that is shown on the map. Click the desired result to fly to the location. The "Result" window may be minimized or expanded by clicking the triangle next to the title.
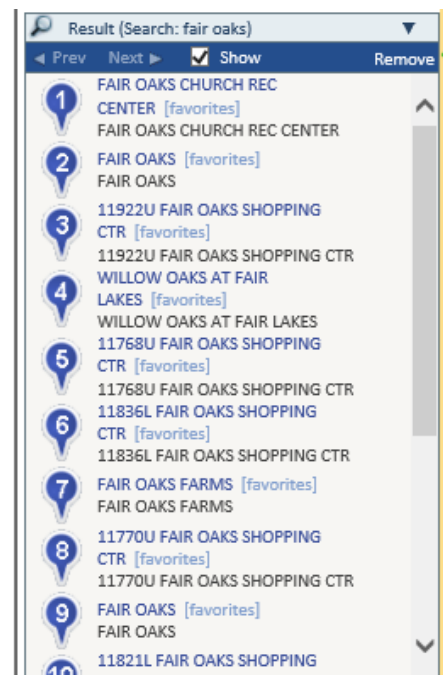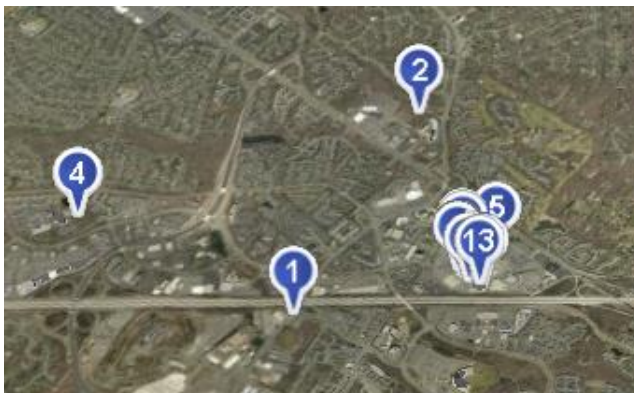
Map Layers and Integration with Other Applications

In addition to the aerial imagery, terrain, and 3-D building data, there are several 2-D map layers available to view in *Virtual Fairfax*. There are both surface features (Addresses, Parcels, Political Boundaries, Roadways, and School Facilities) and thematic label boxes (Government & Education Institutions; Historic Sites, Museums, & Parks; Jurisdictions; and Regions). The surface feature layers draw on the terrain surface and the thematic label layers are always facing the user above the surface.

Addresses, parcels, school facilities, and jurisdiction boundaries are visible on the terrain
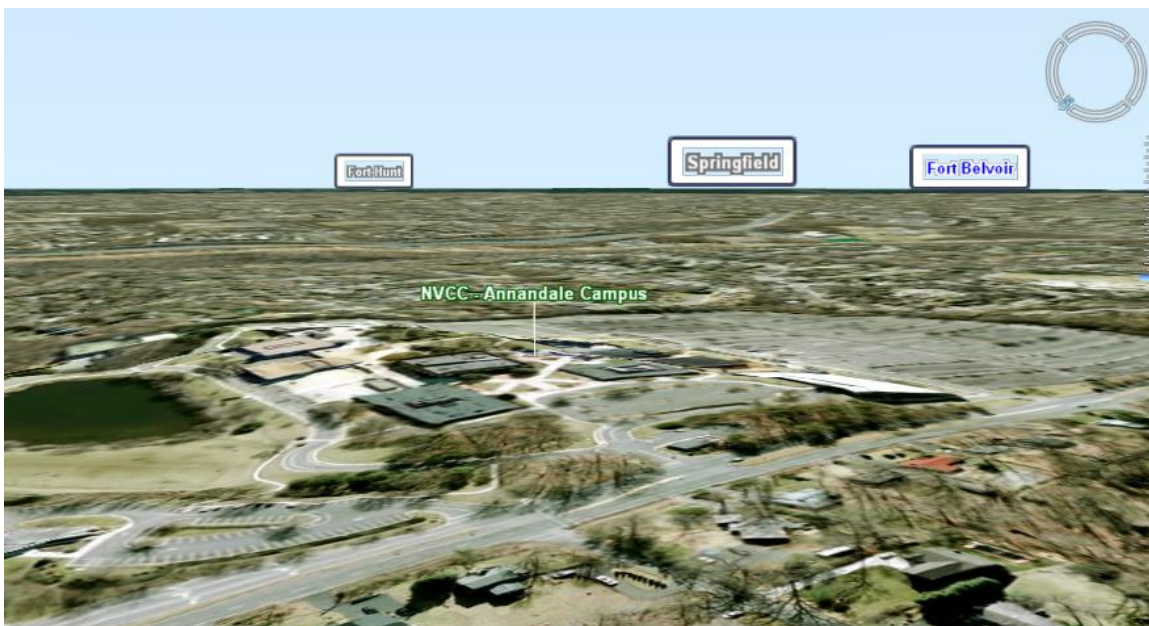
Thematic "billboard" labels for different features are visible on the horizon

The "Map Overlay Layers" tab is found in the left panel. Each entry in the group may be checked on (visible) or off (not visible) by clicking the circle next to them.

You may not wish to see all 2-D layers concurrently. First, each layer that has to draw will increase processing and draw times in the map window—the more layers, the slower the performance. Secondly, displaying too many layers can lead to a cluttered and confusing map view.

Addresses and the thematic label layers provide more information when clicked. Clicking the house icon 🏠 (you may need to turn off the 3-D building model layer to access) opens an "Address Information" window that provides the mailing address in addition to links to other applications.
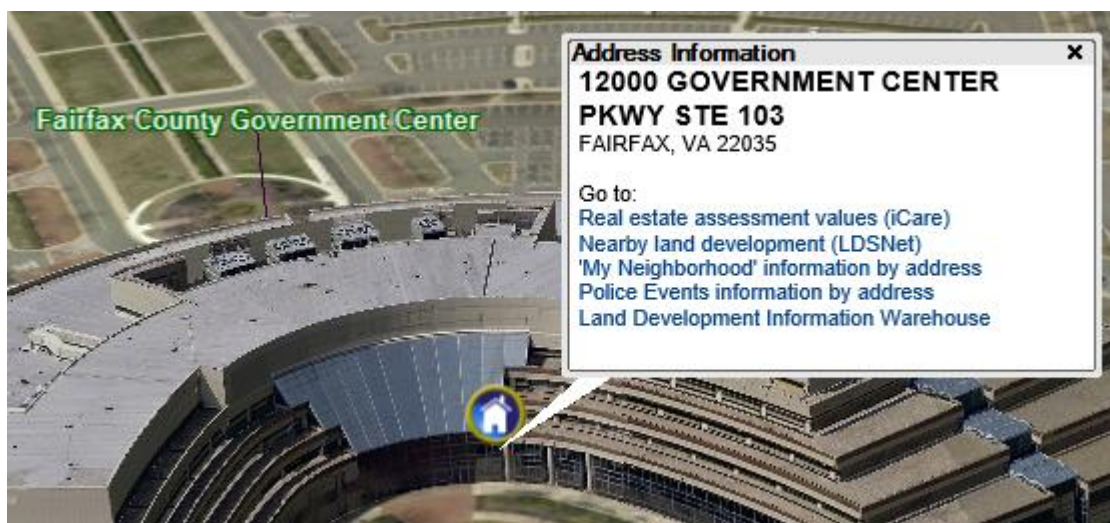
POI, Map Layers, Labels

Points of Interest
Building Models
Map Overlay Layers
Label Markers

- ✓ Addresses
- ○ Parcels
- ✓ Political Boundaries
- ○ Roadways
- ✓ Metro Rail Lines & Stations
- ○ Schools
- ○ Tysons Corner Development Plan

These application links go directly to the respective application page for the chosen address. One click from the Address Information window can provide extensive ownership and assessment information from Department of Tax Administration's iCare tax information application. Another click will reveal nearby land development information (subdivision applications, rezonings, building permits, etc.) from the LDSNet application and Land Development Information History system. Clicking My Neighborhood link provides maps and a large report describing items such as the address' political representatives, the nearest hospital, and its designated FCPS school cluster. There is also a link to the Police Events Viewer that provides a map of all police calls for service near the address.

An "Address Information" window is revealed when clicking a house icon

The iCare page for the Government Center--sales, value, and structural information is accessible

The MyNeighborhood page for the Government Center. A full report found on the left panel provides a vast amount of neighborhood information including address location's elected officials; polling places; watersheds; FCPS school pyramids, demographic information; and nearest parks, libraries, post offices, hospitals, police stations,& fire stations.

LDSnet provides a list of development activity that is within a quarter mile of a designated address—zoning applications, subdivision & site plans, and building permits can easily be viewed online.

A view from the Police Events Viewer.

Clicking any of the thematic labels (cities, towns, historic sites, colleges, parks, or government buildings) will open a window that reveals more information about that site. Most information windows have a text description in addition to website link that has additional information. Moving the mouse (without clicking) over labels may also open a callout box with additional site information.

Clicking the Ox Hill Battlefield Historic Site label reveals a window with a description and a link to a Fairfax County Parks Authority website.

Clicking the Dulles airport label opens a window with a small description and a link to the airport's website. Notice that mousing over the label without clicking gives a callout box with some additional information

Contact and Support

Please visit the *Virtual Fairfax* **support page** which contains a quick start guide, full application documentation, and answers to several frequently asked questions. Comments or questions about *Virtual Fairfax* may be sent to **DITVirtual-Fairfax@fairfaxcounty.gov**. The developers of *Virtual Fairfax* are also interested in hearing ideas for new features and changes in future versions of the application.